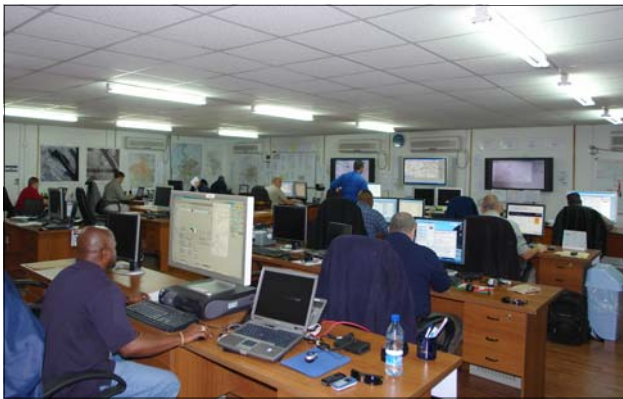




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Building the perfect team for takeover – GRD Logistics

By Julie Cupernall
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Employees at the Gulf Region Division Logistics Movement Coordination Center request permission for, register and monitor convoy movements throughout the battle space in Iraq. [USACE Gulf Region Division Photo]

BAGHDAD, IRAQ – While there may be thousands of people working on reconstruction efforts across Iraq, there are 35 people who play a major role that you'll never see in the news.

Those 35 people make up the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Division Logistics Movement Coordination Center (LMCC), located in the International Zone. The LMCC coordinates the movement of coalition property throughout the country of Iraq. Without the materials moved by the LMCC, very little would be possible in the areas of security and reconstruction.

"The Logistics Movement Coordination Center is a collection of minds, banded together to solve a problem of movement and all its complexities," said Jack Holly, GRD Logistics Director. "Everything you see in the LMCC are tools to assist in that decision making process."

After two-and-a-half years, the LMCC is a well-oiled machine of materials movement. It hasn't been accomplished without more than a

little bit of adjustment to the machine though.

From the beginning, the LMCC has been organized as a team that will one day be taken over by Iraqis. This envisioned end state created a couple of challenges from the on-set. First, even though the convoy environment is extremely dangerous - the LMCC could not be a classified organization if it was to support Iraqi apprenticeship. Secondly, although the movement environment is military - the LMCC had to be mainly contractors because the LMCC needs to be sustainable for reconstruction needs while coalition forces concentrate on the security mission.

Holly, who has been directing the LMCC since its inception in 2003, tackled these challenges by creating a new business model - a team primarily run by contractors in a military environment with a desired end state of total takeover by the Iraqi government. The LMCC was accomplished through what members of Holly's team describe as the "three Cs:" coordination, communication and cooperation.

Coordination

The initial issue boiled down to responsibility. While it was the contractor's responsibility at the LMCC to coordinate movements of materials around Iraq, it was not included in their contracts that those movements needed to be coordinated with the military elements controlling the areas the convoys were moving through. This lack of coordination did not sit well with the military.

On the other end of the spectrum, military quick reaction forces, emergency response and medical evacuation teams were not explicitly responsible for covering the LMCC convoys. This lack of coordination was causing insurance



Iraqi apprenticeship is integral at USACE's Gulf Region Division Logistics. Iraqi workers are on the job at a warehouse in Abu Ghraib, Baghdad Province - so they can continue the work after Coalition forces leave. [USACE Gulf Region Division Photos]

premiums for the LMCC's contract companies to go through the roof.

Drawing upon his many years of experience as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps, Holly recognized this lack of coordination and set out to resolve it. In short, he convinced the contract companies at the LMCC to request permission for, register and track their movements with the military controlling the battle space. The trade was a guarantee from the military for quick response forces and med-evac support in the event of a convoy attack.

Coalition forces were getting their logistics needs fulfilled, while keeping a better view of their operating environment, and the contract companies working at the LMCC received a safer work space which dramatically lessened their insurance premiums.

Communication

During the coordination phase of the LMCC, the need for effective communication between the contractors controlling and executing the movement and Coalition forces on the ground was recognized as the deal maker or breaker.

The foremost question: How to talk about movements in an unclassified environment without tipping off the bad guys? The answer was encryption of data, much in the same manner that banks do. The encryptions aren't foolproof, but are difficult enough that by the time the info is decrypted, the movements will be complete.

"We had to be unclassified - but that does not mean stupid. It means we have to use commercial methods of encryption. You understand the security concerns of certain things you do, but you're not under the restrictive umbrella of a Department of Defense security organization that makes working with other people, other countries and private industry very hard," said Holly.

The ability to safely track the reconstruction resources needed to get \$13 billion worth of reconstruction underway has not gone unnoticed by the commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Division.

"We can track our reconstruction resources directly from the border, and we can make sure we do that in a secure way. It's a vitally important job. It's vitally to what we do," said Brig. Gen. Michael Walsh.

The second question: How to track the materials convoys in real time? Real time is necessary for two reasons - so Coalition forces know that the convoys are "friendlies" and so when the convoys come under attack, help can be on the way within minutes.

The LMCC answered this need by using removable tracking devices on all their convoys. The tracking devices are monitored by employees at the LMCC and by Coalition forces. The complex computer software that monitors the tracking devices on the convoys is constantly being updated and reconfigured to better meet the LMCC's needs. In fact, the contract company that designs the tracking software has an employee on the ground in Baghdad so needs can constantly be assessed and addressed.

Cooperation

The LMCC and Coalition partners are firmly within the cooperation phase now. In the past two-and-a-half years, more than 11, 300 con-

voys have been guided by the organization – including the delivery of more than 28,500 vehicles and 353 million rounds of ammunition.

Sadly, even the best cooperation in a war zone doesn't eliminate danger completely. The dedicated workers of the LMCC have paid a high price for moving the materials that keep the Coalition moving forward. As of February 14, 2007, there had been 977 attacks on LMCC guided convoys, resulting in 129 dead and 370 wounded. Many of the killed and wounded have been Iraqi associates.

The Way Forward

GRD Logistics and the LMCC have always had one end state: total takeover of operations by the Iraqi people. With this goal constantly kept in mind, Iraqis are working and succeeding at the LMCC and on the convoys moving across their country.

Iraqis also are working at the GRD Logistics warehouses in Baghdad and Um Qasr - learning the additional skills of inventory control along

with materials movement.

"I'm very glad to be working for this company. I have learned many things and this allows me to serve my country and provide for my family's future," said one Iraqi GRD Logistics employee (anonymous due to security concerns).

There have also been lessons learned for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Coalition forces. The LMCC is a new business model and it works. The military outsourcing to contractors who outsource to Iraqis not only gets the job done now, it's ensuring that after Iraqis have total independence- the job will continue to get done.

And according to Holly, perhaps the biggest lesson learned at the LMCC is to operate in a learning environment.

"The battle field is changing so dramatically every day and every week that it is a luxury of laziness to accept that what worked last week will work next week. It doesn't happen. Every week you have to analyze, re-look, reevaluate and maybe come up with changes as to how you're doing things."

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